

February 6, 2023

To the State of Connecticut Committee on Children;

My name is Lesley Munshower and I am the Parks and Recreation Director for the Town of Coventry. I have been a director at summer youth camps, both day and overnight, for over 15 years. These camps have been both licensed and unlicensed camps. I have coordinated the licensing process for both summer camps and afterschool programs in New York and Connecticut. I am also as Associate Visitor for the American Camp Association.

While I support the intention of wanting to ensure safety for children at all summer camps in Connecticut through licensing, I have some concerns about the process of coordinating this change and the repercussions of licensing all municipal summer camp programs.

First, the cost of operating a licensed youth camp would most likely be passed onto the family's camp fees. The estimated cost for Coventry to meet the licensing requirements is \$17,000. This would be passed onto the approximately 75 campers per week over our 8 week summer program, averaging out to an increase of \$30/week. While this may not seem like a significant increase, most of our families are sending multiple children to camp over multiple weeks. Municipal camps are often the most affordable option for families. With a significant increase we would have families that could not afford camp and these children may be left at home or we could see a decline in numbers that puts the whole program at potential risk of closure.

Second, if the price of camp increases and all municipal camps are licensed then those camps would also be eligible for Care 4 Kids. Is there additional funding for the Care 4 Kids program to ensure that families can afford to attend summer camp?

Third, while Coventry operates summer camp at one site, has the committee considered larger towns/cities that operate at multiple sites to accommodate a larger population or families with transportation challenges? These larger towns would need to meet the licensing requirements at multiple sites significantly increasing their costs and potential closing sites. This would significantly impact urban cities such as Hartford, Bridgeport, New Haven and more.

Lastly, is the State of Connecticut prepared to handle the influx of licensing paperwork and site visits? How many more summer camp programs would need to complete licensing paperwork? How many more state employees would need to be hired to complete summer camp site visits?

Has the Committee considered requiring municipal youth camp to complete just the licensing requirements for Care 4 Kids sites? Taking that first step may be a compromise for municipal youth camps to begin the licensing process. The requirements for a Care 4 Kids site ensure safety but are not as cumbersome for municipal youth camps to address.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. Thank you for all of the work you are doing for children across the State of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Lesley Munshower, Parks and Recreation Director

Coventry Parks and Recreation